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C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 002719

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FOR ENERGY SECRETARY BODMAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/11/2014

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SUBJECT: ENERGY MINISTER CANCELS TRIP TO U.S.

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Robert O. Blake for Reasons 1.5  
(B,D)

1.(C) Energy Minister Mani Shankar Aiyar contacted the Embassy on April 11 to convey his regret that he will not be able to travel to the United States to meet with Energy Secretary Bodman and address an energy symposium at Harvard.

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The Minister explained that the Emir of Qatar had scheduled a short notice visit to India, for which he must be present given India's important energy interests with Qatar. The Minister asked that the Embassy convey his best wishes to Secretary Bodman and his invitation for the Secretary to

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visit India at his earliest convenience. Qatar is presently one of India's major suppliers of imported gas, with plans for significant further expansion of capacity in the next few years. This Qatar option is particularly important as a potential alternative if a gas pipeline from Iran proves not to be feasible.

2. (C) COMMENT: Despite talk of the Qatari visit, we suspect that a major factor in the Minister's cancellation was MEA's concern about protecting the Foreign Minister's agenda in Washington this week and ensuring that Mani Shankar Aiyar does not muddle the GOI's message to DOE. Aiyar is widely rumored to be a contender for Congress Foreign Minister if Natwar Singh ever moves on. When the Ambassador spoke with Natwar on April 8, the Foreign Minister intimated that he would make sure that Mani's agenda with Secretary Bodman did not conflict with Montek Singh Ahluwalia's, who is part of the MEA delegation.  
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